

SECRETCAPABILITY OF TRANSPORT NETWORK IN CAMBODIA TO MOVE MILITARY SUPPLIES
TO THE COMMUNISTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

The port of Sihanoukville is handling about 220,000 tons* of imports per year at present. It is estimated that an additional 450,000 tons could be imported with normal port operations. On the assumption that the Cambodians were to cooperate with the Communists and permit 450,000 tons of military supplies to be imported per year (about 1,200 tons per day), several routes would be available for further movement of the supplies to the South Vietnamese border.

The shortest route would be the comparatively low-capacity 115-mile route that follows the south coast (route 3 to Kampot and routes 16 and 17 to the border of Kien Giang Province). The limiting sector of this route has a capacity of 1,100 tons per day in the dry season and 150 tons in the wet season. Thus all but about 100 tons of the total volume of military supplies imported during the dry season could be moved over this route. Such a logistics operation would require the use of about 800 trucks.** During the wet season only about one-tenth of the volume could be moved over this route, and the remainder would have to be moved north on higher capacity roads or by coastal water transport.

The major route, which could be used all year, is route 4, the Sihanoukville - Phnom Penh American Friendship Highway. The distance to Phnom Penh is about 145 miles. The route has a dry season capacity of 8,150 tons daily and a wet season capacity of 7,350 tons. From Phnom Penh the best route to the border is route 1 which runs east to the southeastern border of Tay Ninh Province. It has a dry season capacity of 4,200 tons daily and a wet season capacity of 1,800 tons. The movement of 1,200 tons daily from Sihanoukville to the border on this route would require about 1,500 to 2,000 trucks. There are also two routes extending north from Phnom Penh or route 1 and connecting with route 7 which approaches the northern border of Tay Ninh Province. These routes have lower capacities than route 1, especially in the wet season, and would be somewhat longer routes. From Phnom Penh there are two other slightly shorter routes that extend south to the

* Short tons are used throughout this memorandum.

** Assuming each truck carries 3.5 tons.

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

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border of Kien Giang and Chau Doc Provinces. The total tonnage could be moved over these two routes throughout the year and would require about 1,500 trucks.

Current data are not available on the size of the truck inventory in Cambodia. It is tentatively estimated to consist of about 10,000 trucks of all types. New vehicles, fuel and spare parts all must be imported.

Coastal water and the inland waterways that cross the South Vietnamese border in the Delta area or follow along the border are alternative routes that could be used. There are at least four navigable rivers that cross the border, the major one being the Mekong. Oceangoing craft of up to 11 feet in draft may travel on the Mekong below Phnom Penh at all times, and craft with larger drafts during periods of spring high water. From Phnom Penh to An Long near the border the capacity of the river is estimated at 6,000 tons per day.

The three other rivers have smaller safe drafts. The Fleuve Bassac has a safe draft of about 8 feet at high water and 5 at low water. The Rach Bao that enters Tay Ninh Province has a year-round safe draft of 5 feet. The Riviere de Takeo that crosses into Chau Doc Province has a high-water safe draft of 5 feet and a low-water of about 2.

The junks used in this area of the world vary in size and design, but the most general type is about 65 feet long and 15 feet wide, with a draft of about 6 feet and a capacity of about 100 tons. It appears, therefore, that junks of this type, if loaded to less than capacity, could use all 4 rivers during high-water periods and all rivers except the Riviere de Takeo at low water. Flat-bottomed sampans might be able to use the 4 rivers at all times. They also vary in type and range in capacity from 5 to 120 tons.

The Canal de Vinh Te lies in South Vietnam along the Cambodian border. This canal connects the Gulf of Siam with the Rach Giang Thanh, the Riviere de Takeo, and the Fleuve Bassac. Thus coastal and inland water together provide another route that could be used to move supplies from Sihanoukville. The 18½-mile section of the canal from the Gulf to Giang Thanh can take craft with drafts of up to about 8 feet and possibly larger. From Giang Thanh to Chau Doc on the Bassac, a distance of 41 miles, the canal becomes more shallow and can take a maximum draft of only about 3 feet.

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